

**JORY JOHN** and **PETE OSWALD** are the #1 *New York Times* best-selling creators of *The Bad Seed*, *The Good Egg*, *The Cool Bean*, *The Couch Potato*, *The Smart Cookie*, *The Sour Grape*, and other books in their internationally acclaimed Food Group series. Jory and Pete also collaborated on the *New York Times* bestselling *The Good Egg Presents: The Great Eggscape!*, *The Bad Seed Presents: The Good, the Bad, and the Spooky*, and *The Cool Bean Presents: As Cool as It Gets*. Jory writes at home in the Pacific Northwest and Pete illustrates in his California studio. Visit them at [joryjohn.com](http://joryjohn.com) and [peteoswald.com](http://peteoswald.com).

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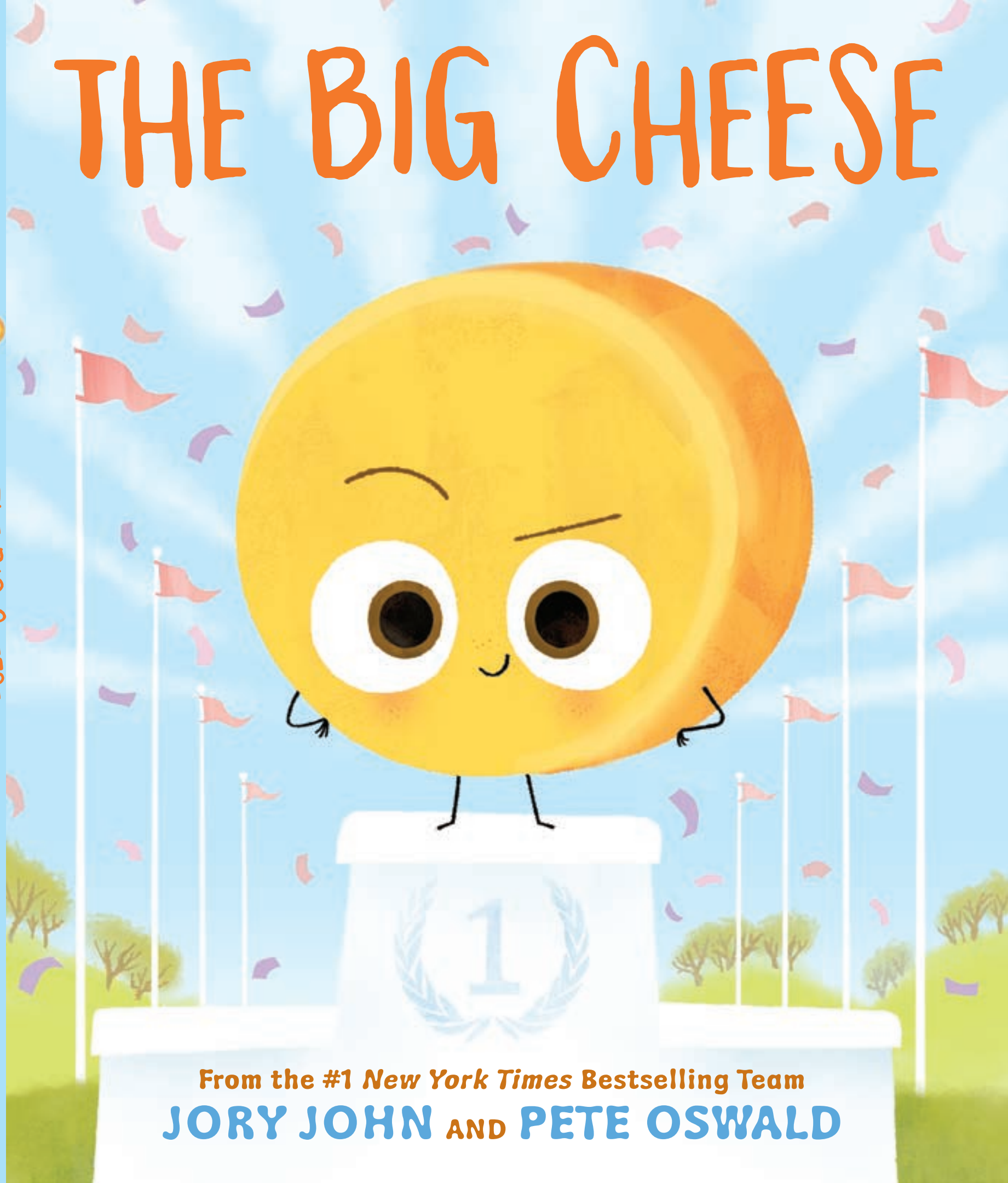
JOHN • OSWALD



THE BIG CHEESE

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# THE BIG CHEESE



From the #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Team  
**JORY JOHN AND PETE OSWALD**

I'M  
**THE BIG  
CHEESE!**

"TA-DA."



**YOU'D BETTER  
BELIEVE IT!**

ALL I DO IS WIN, WIN, AND WIN  
AGAIN. BUT WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN I ... LOSE?

Find out how one hunk of cheddar learns that some things are better than always being the best in this fresh offering from the #1 *New York Times* bestselling Food Group series.

**HARPER**  
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For Alyssa—J.J.

To Mom—P.O.



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The artist used scanned watercolor textures  
and digital paint to create the illustrations for this book.  
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First Edition

# THE BIG CHEESE



written by **JORY JOHN**

illustrated by **PETE OSWALD**

**HARPER**

An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers

They call me Cheese.  
The Big Cheese.

Oh, say it with me, please . . .  
**THE BIG CHEESE!**

“TA-DA.”



CURDS-ON-WHEY

**YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT.**

That's right, folks. I'm the biggest, cheesiest piece of cheddar around.



I'm really something to behold.  
Take a good look at me.  
Are you seeing what I'm seeing? *Hmm?!*  
Have you EVER observed a more  
impressive cheese in your life?

It's not just my stature, either. It's my presence. My vibe.  
The energy I emanate. The excitement I exude.

It's the way I fill a room,



or a theater,



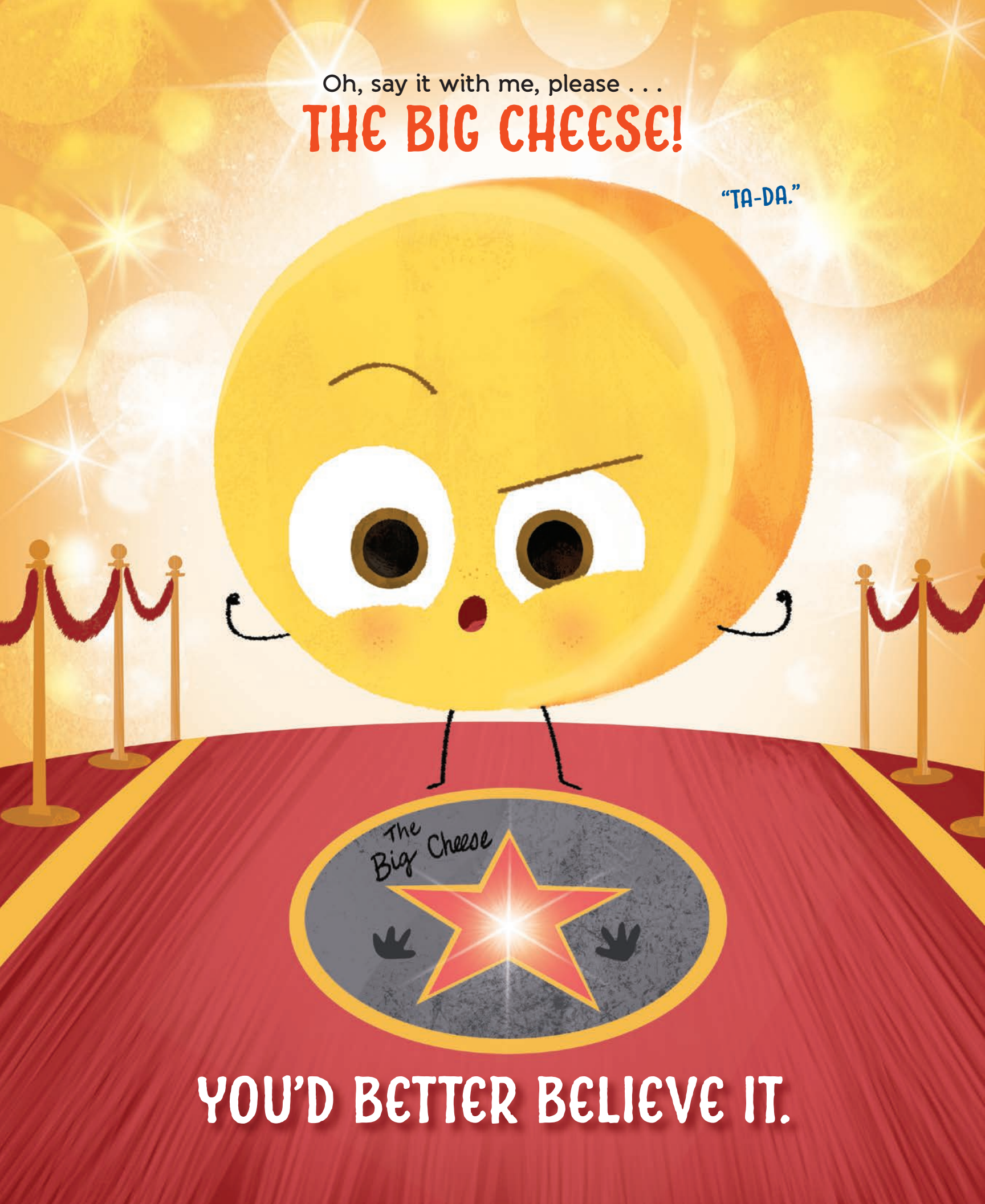
or a stadium.



Wherever I go, I cause a fuss.  
Heads turn. Jaws drop. Gasps are audible.  
That's why they call me Cheese.

Oh, say it with me, please . . .  
**THE BIG CHEESE!**

"TA-DA."



**YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT.**

How did I get such a good—or should I say *gouda*—reputation?

Well . . . I wasn't always a big shot.  
I grew up on a crowded platter in a tiny kitchen.  
I was an unremarkable little curd. We lived quiet lives  
of pasteurization.



But I wasn't happy with the status quo, oh no.  
I wanted to make a big ol' name for myself.  
So I resolved to become a Big Cheese.

I wanted the praise. The cheers. The spotlight.  
The attention. The ovations. The celebrations.  
I set to work and, before long, I was on the fast  
track to success.

I dressed to impress.



I shredded the competition.



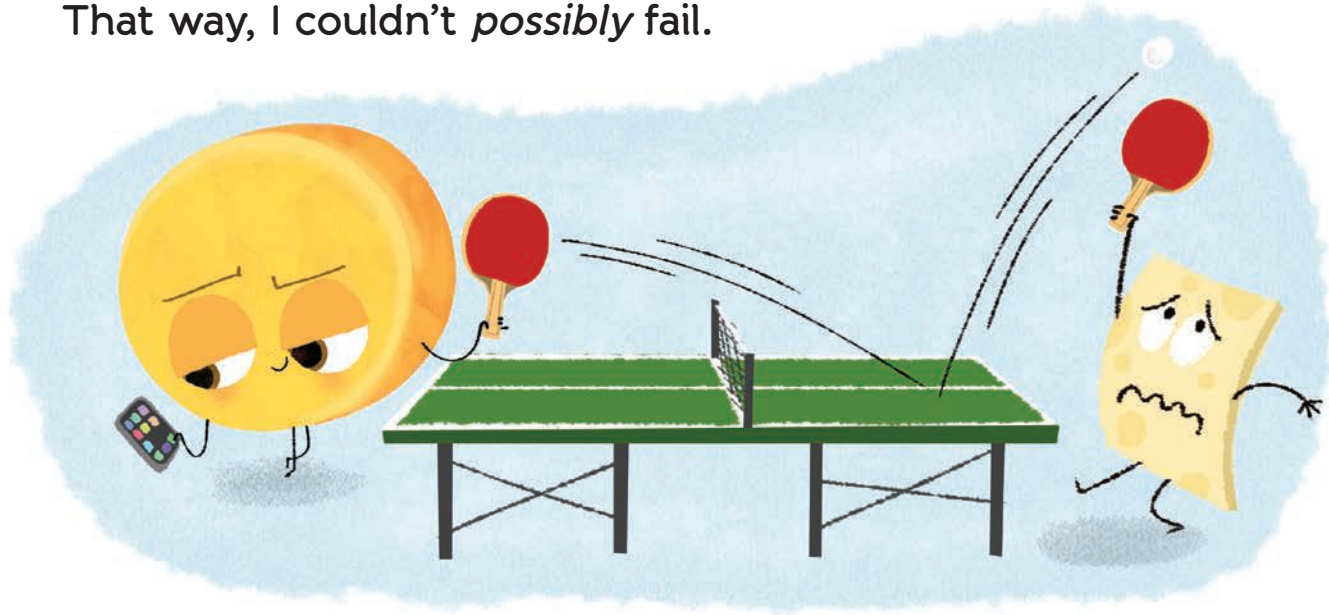
I stole every show.



And then I'd brag nonstop to anybody who'd listen.



What was the secret to my success?  
Well, I stuck to the things I was good at.  
That way, I couldn't *possibly* fail.



Did it get a little boring never trying anything new?  
I suppose.  
But it didn't matter as long as everyone agreed that I was . . .

oh, say it with me, please . . .  
**THE BIG CHEESE!**



But then, one fateful day, I met Wedge.  
He was new in town and he seemed to be  
my exact *opposite* in every way.

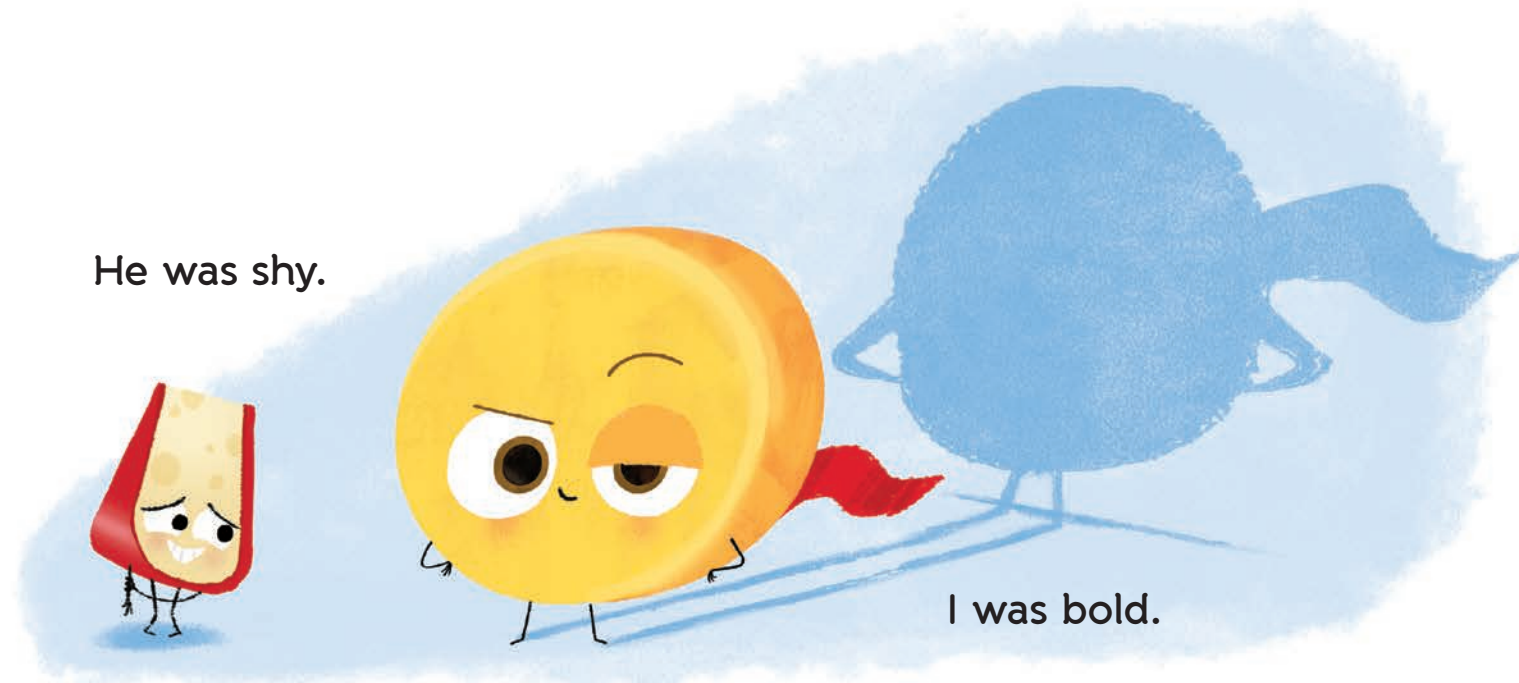


While I dominated conversations, he kept to himself.



I didn't pay him much attention at first, because why would I?  
I was too preoccupied with being the center of *my* universe.

He was shy.



Here's what happened:

Every summer, our tiny village staged an all-day Cheese-cathlon. Guess who had first-place trophies from the last six years? Hmm?



Oh, say it with me, please . . .  
**THE BIG CHEESE!**

"TA-DA."

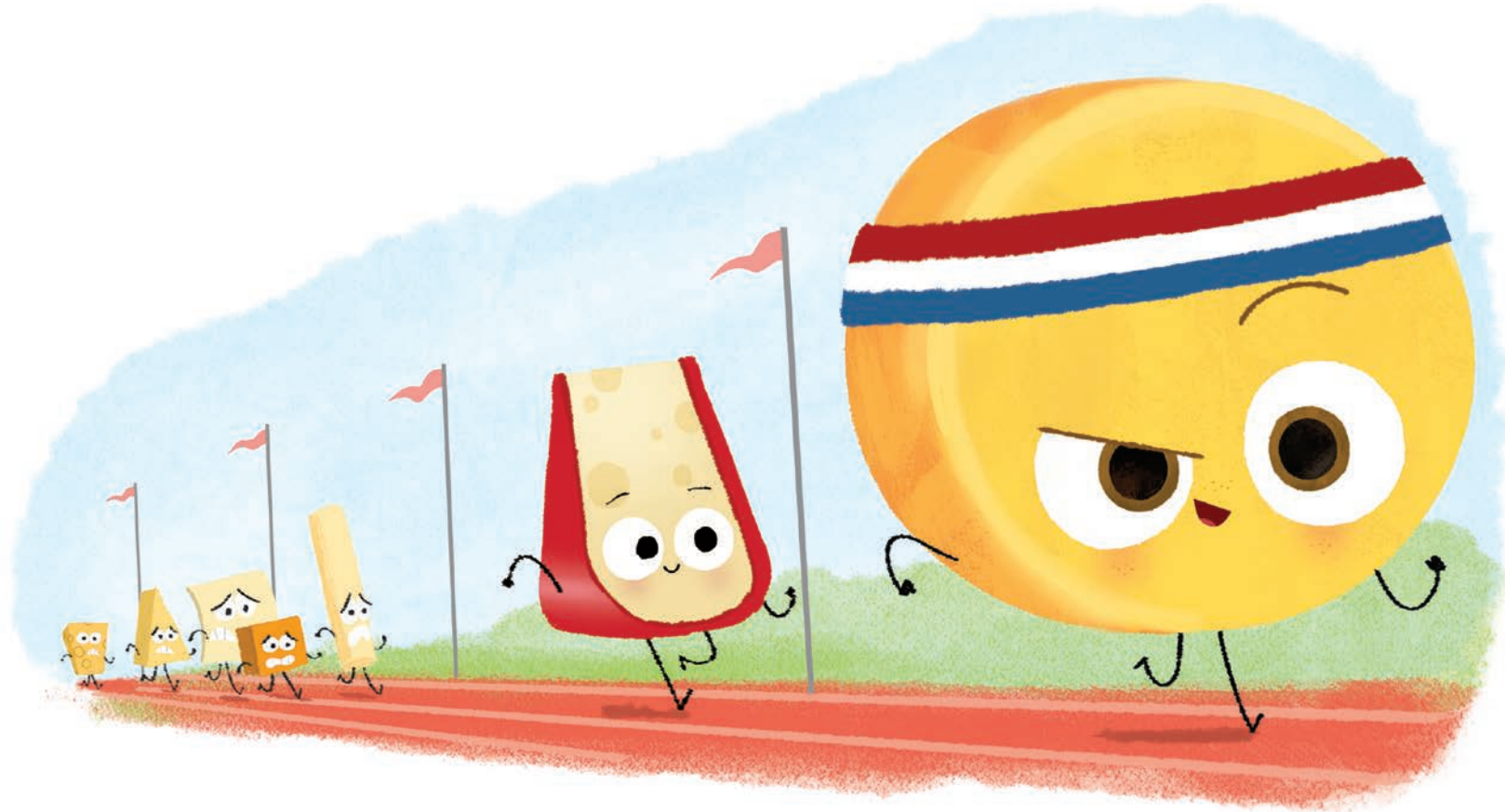


**YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT.**

This year's opening ceremony started at 5 a.m., *sharp*.  
I was fully primed and prepared to prevail.



First up was a footrace, and I zipped into the lead.



Within seconds, though, there was someone on my heels.  
I could hear his breath, the pitter-patter of his agile feet.  
It was Wedge!

**I. COULD. NOT. BELIEVE IT!**

Oh, he was fast.  
Not just fast, but skilled. Disciplined. He paced himself.  
We were neck and neck for most of the race, but  
when I slipped on a rogue pebble . . .



Wedge swerved, sped up,  
and beat me by a nose.  
*A cheese-nose!*



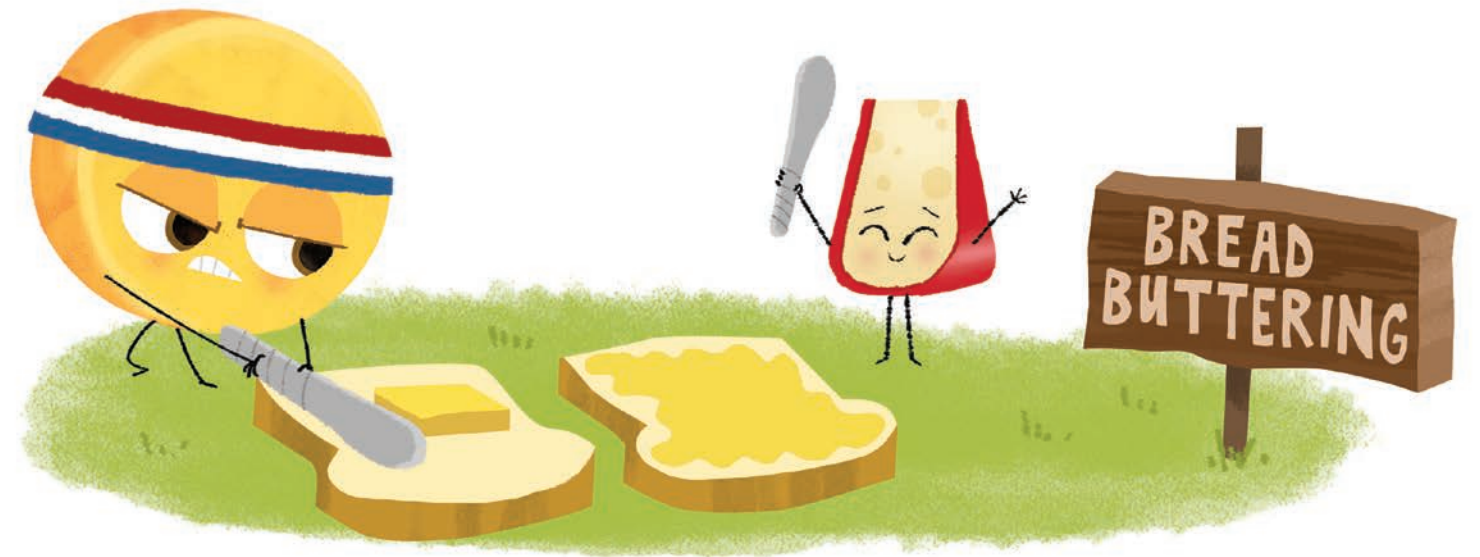
For the first time, I'd come in *second* place.  
Oh, the indignity!  
But there was no time to sulk because the *next* leg  
of the competition had already started.

It was a game of chess.



Before I could blink or think, Wedge had taken my king  
in four moves and—while I was busy protesting to the  
judges—he'd already moved on.

The following events were a blur of loss  
after loss after humiliating loss.



It turned out that Wedge was quietly excellent at . . . *everything*.  
Even when he won, though, he didn't gloat.  
He was sooooo humble.



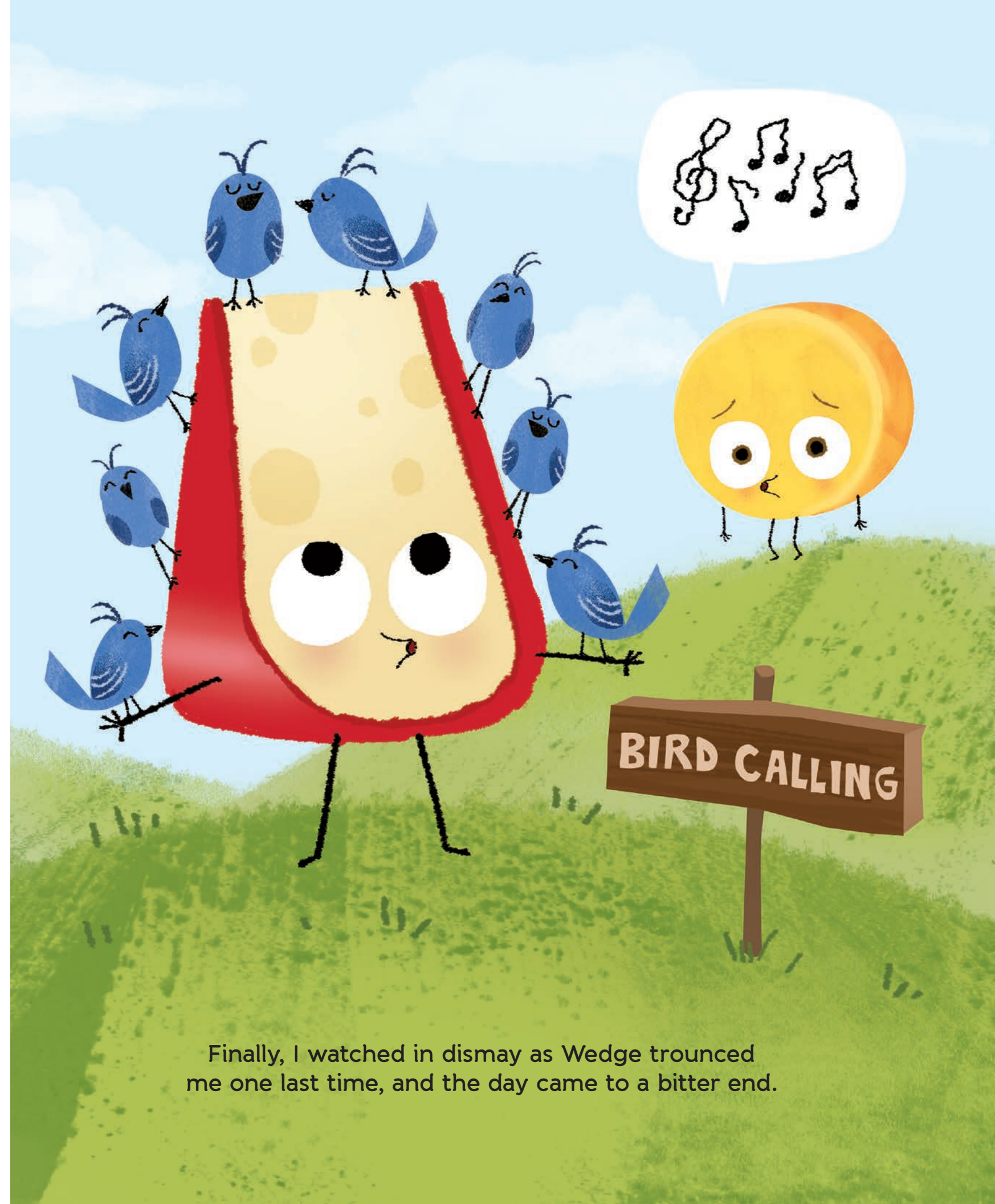
It was . . . odd.



It was . . . disconcerting.



It was . . . absolutely **BAFFLING!**



Finally, I watched in dismay as Wedge trounced me one last time, and the day came to a bitter end.

Well . . . bitter for *me*, at least. I went through every possible emotion . . .

“ARRGH!”



“RAAAA!”



“NOOOO!”



“BOOOO!”



“WAHHH!”



until I'd finally exhausted myself.

And as I lay in the muck, I heard a thunderous voice making the dreaded announcement:

FIRST PLACE GOES TO  
NEWCOMER  
WEDGE WEDGEMAN!

WHUMP

“SIGH”

The crowd roared its approval.

What had just happened?!  
It was honestly hard to fathom.



I closed my eyes.  
Suddenly . . . inexplicably . . .  
I felt a sense of calm come over me.  
I listened to my breathing, to the  
steady beating of my heart.



Yes, I had lost. Again and again  
and *again*.

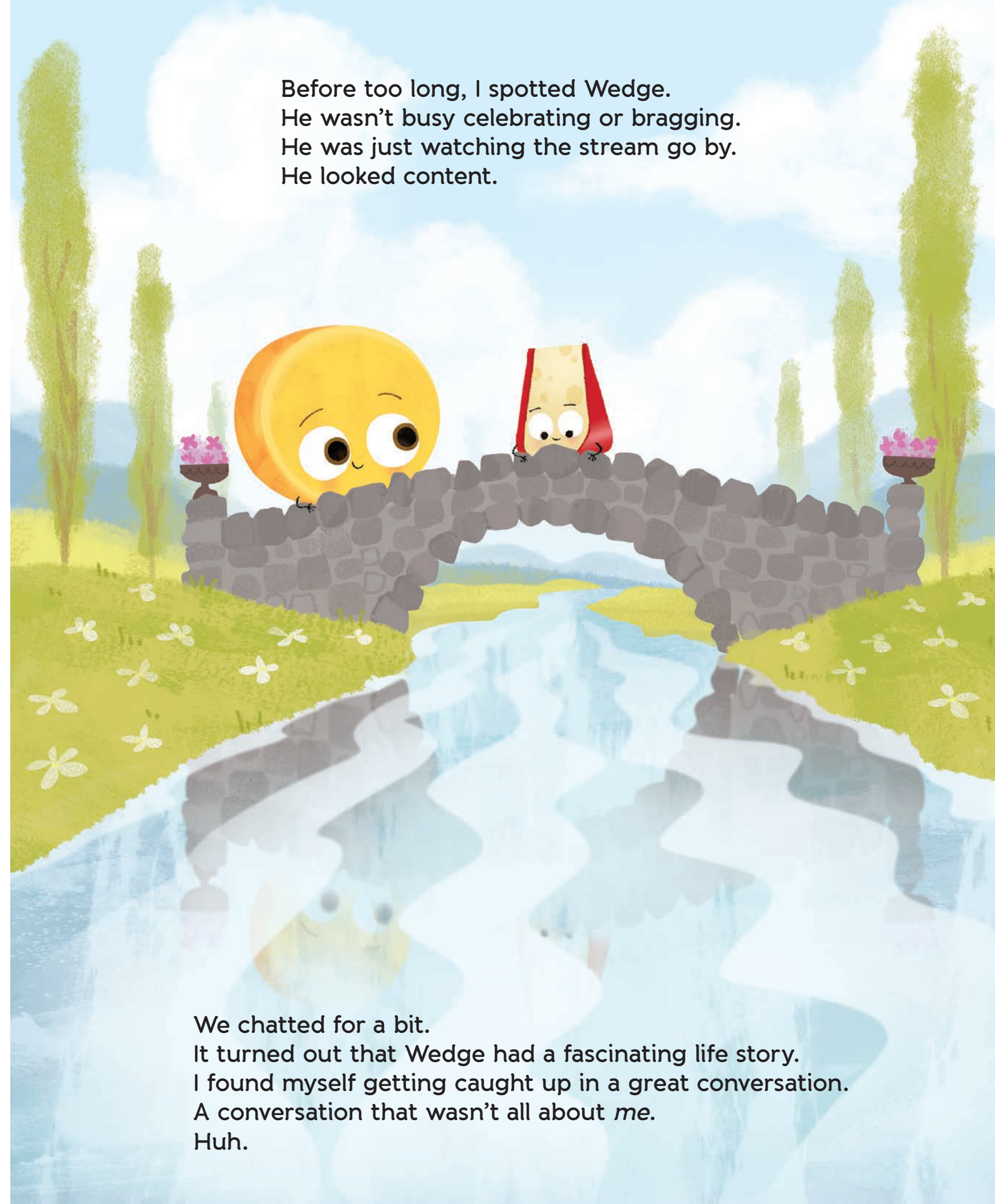
But after all that, I actually  
felt . . . okay. *Relieved*, even.

I suddenly knew that my world  
wasn't going to crumble.



I picked myself up. I dusted myself off. And I headed home.

Before too long, I spotted Wedge.  
He wasn't busy celebrating or bragging.  
He was just watching the stream go by.  
He looked content.



We chatted for a bit.  
It turned out that Wedge had a fascinating life story.  
I found myself getting caught up in a great conversation.  
A conversation that wasn't all about *me*.  
Huh.



That day, I realized something: Maybe it didn't matter if I wasn't the best at everything. In fact, perhaps it was *healthy* for me to lose for once.

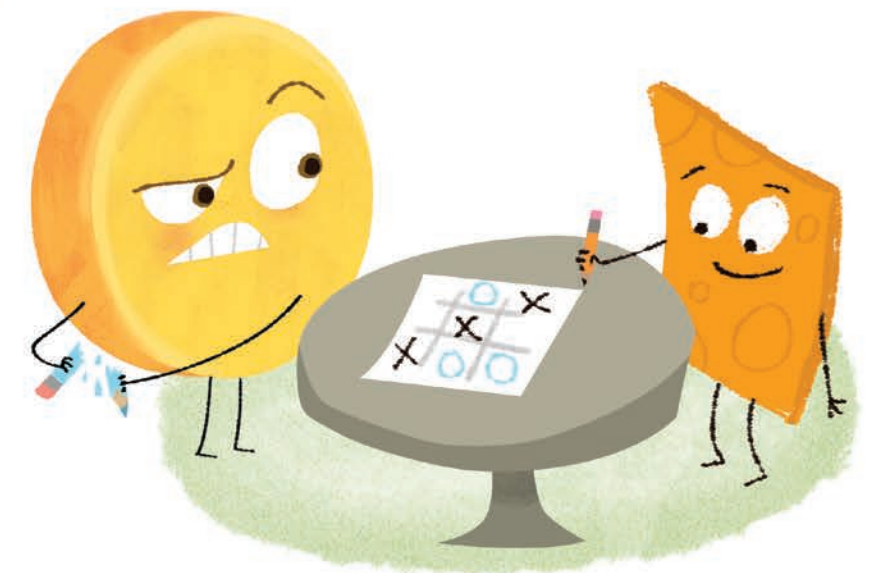
And sure, my ego was bruised in the short term. But over time, I gained some perspective on what's *really* important.

Losing taught me about empathy and humility.

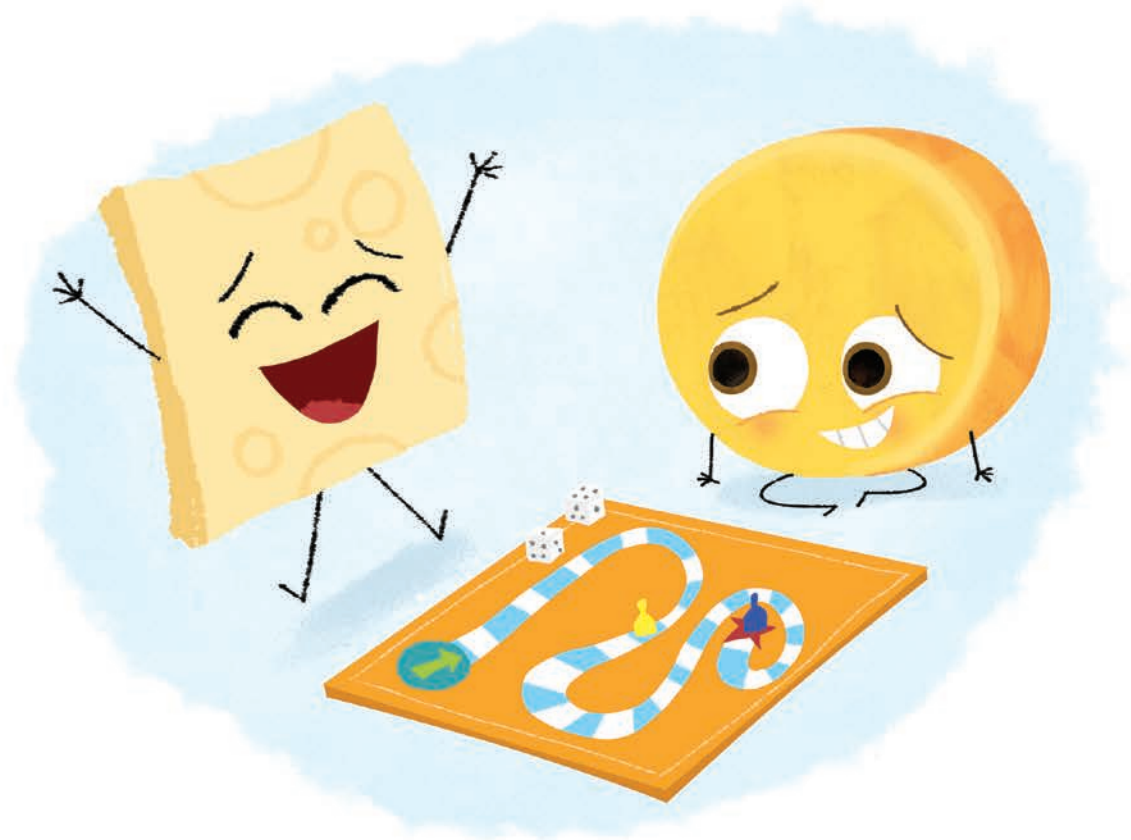


It showed me that I'd become so focused on *winning* that I was missing out on the joy of *participating*.

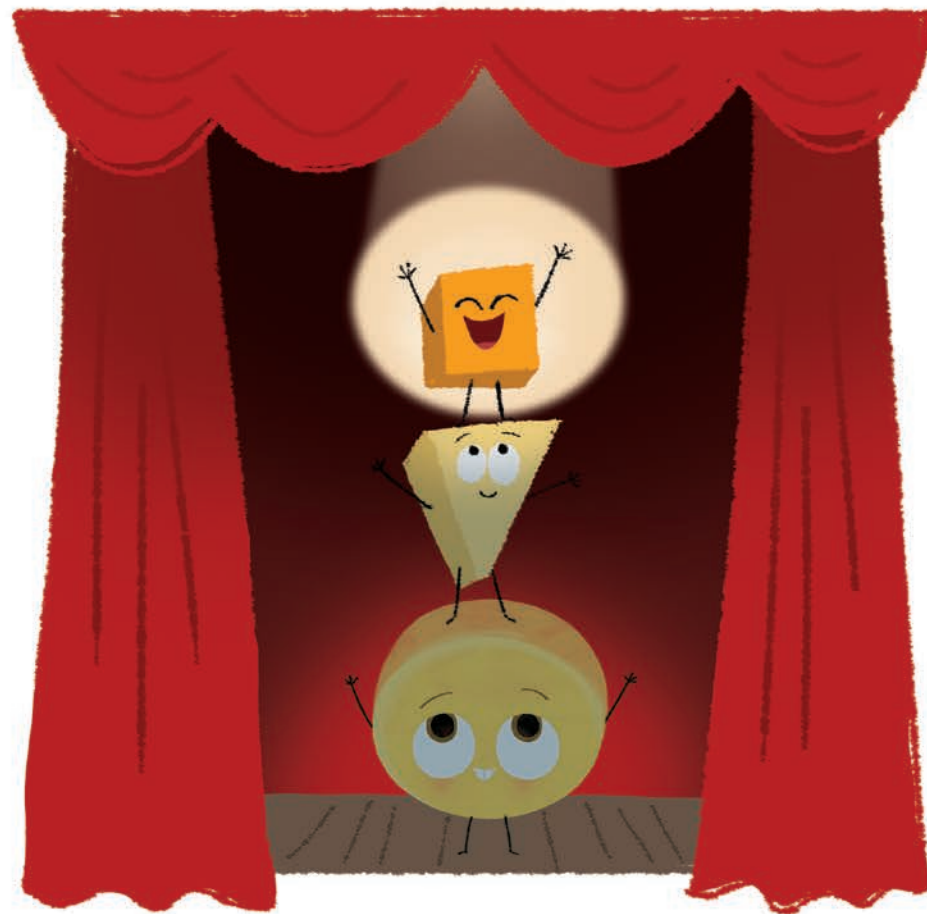
And it helped me see that I can live with defeat . . . even if I get a bit angry or frustrated at first.



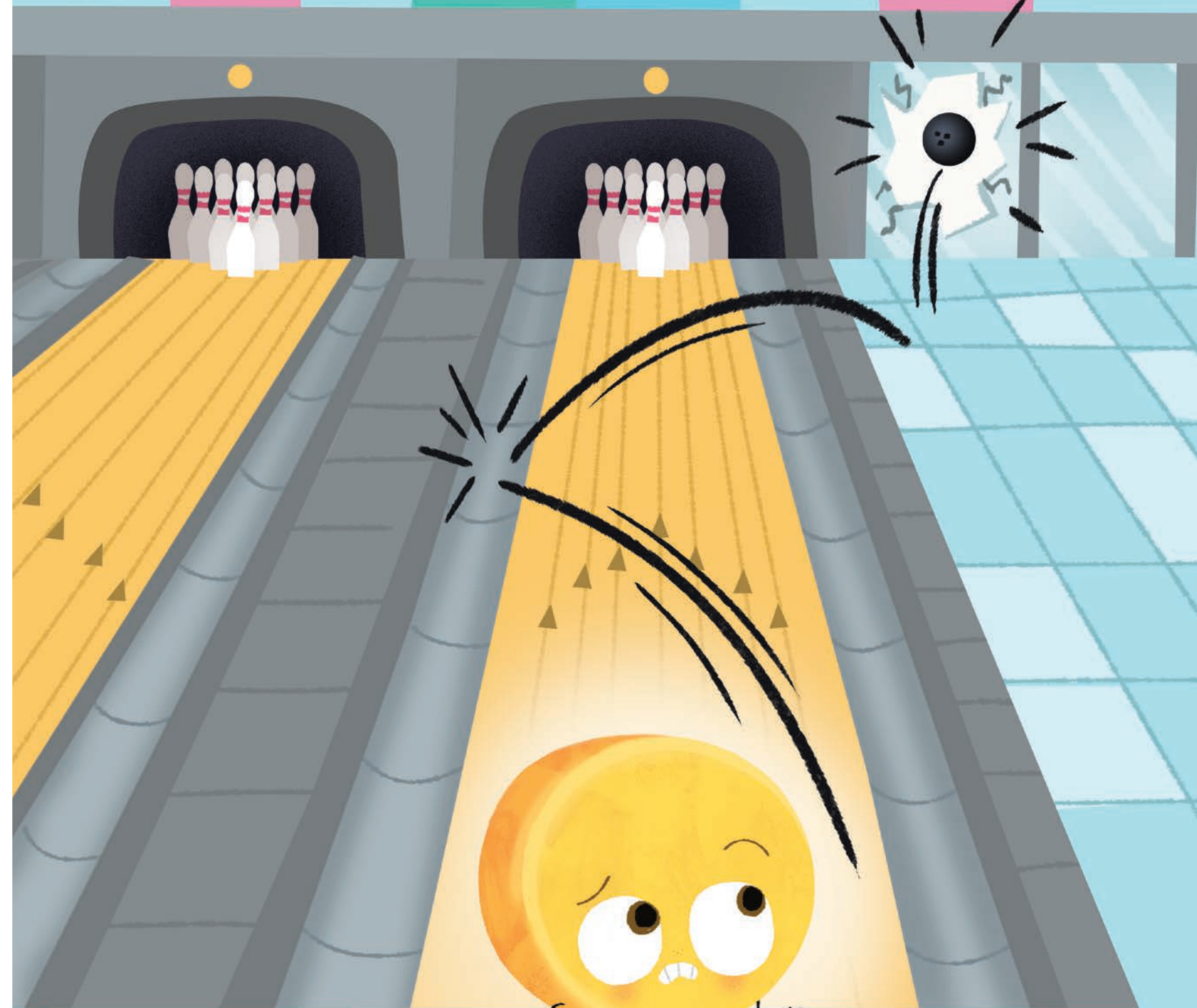
These days, I'm trying not to worry about whether I win or lose.



I don't have to impress everyone all the time. I let *others* have the spotlight.



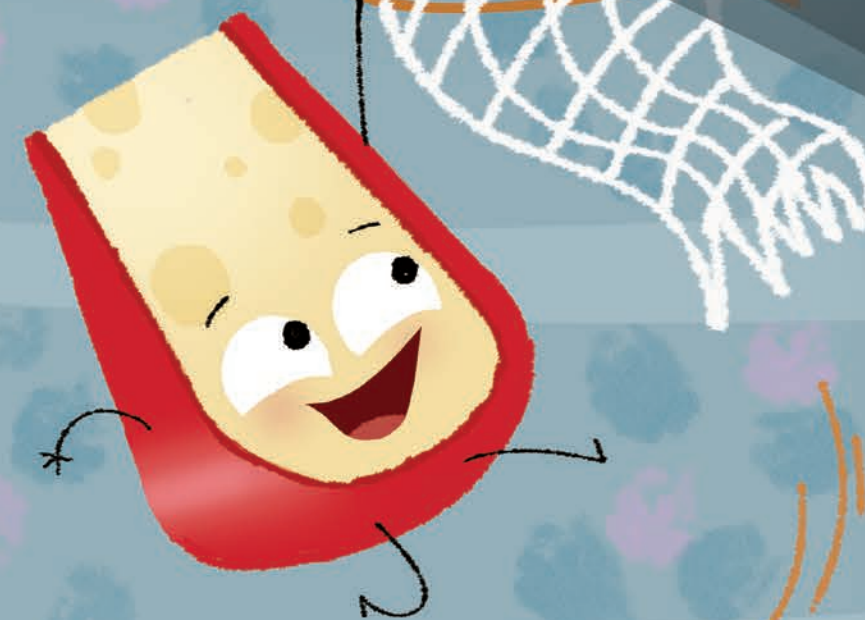
# B O W L I N G



And I've taken up some new hobbies . . . just for *me*.

Yes, I'm trying to be a better wheel of cheddar.  
So now, when I brag about something, well . . .  
I mostly brag about my *friends*.

WHOA! DID YOU SEE THAT?!  
**WHAT A MOVE!**



Because it turns out that anyone—from a crumb of Gorgonzola to a fleck of feta to an unassuming wedge of Brie—can be . . .

oh, say it with me, please . . .

# THE BIG CHEESE!



"TA-DA."

"TA-DA."

"TA-DA."

"TA-DA."

**YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT.**



